

HQ
31
M3
no.2

UC-NRLF



B 3 634 109







FIRST SERIES

MARRIAGE AND MORALITY

PAPERS BY VARIOUS AUTHORS

No. 2

MARRIAGE

A Harmony of Body and Soul

By

GEMMA BAILEY

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

FOURTH AVENUE & 30TH STREET, NEW YORK

BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS

Price Threepence net



FIRST SERIES

MARRIAGE AND MORALITY

PAPERS BY VARIOUS AUTHORS

No. 2

MARRIAGE

A Harmony of Body and Soul

By

GEMMA BAILEY

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

FOURTH AVENUE & 30TH STREET, NEW YORK

BOMBAY CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS

1916

PREFACE

DURING the past few years there has been manifested a growing sense of the necessity for the careful and scientific study of questions affecting social purity.

However important it is that social evil should be faced and dealt with, it is even more important for the future that men and women should understand more clearly the nature of social good. It is indeed unfortunate that so much more thought and attention is given to the discussion of moral failure and moral difficulties than to frank and positive moral teaching.

This series of pamphlets has been prepared in the belief that the presentation of positive and constructive ideals of sex relationship is one of the great needs of the time.

THE EDITOR.

MARRIAGE

A Harmony of Body and Soul

MEN can never be wholly unconscious of the duality which is such a puzzling element in human nature. We find in ourselves at once links binding us to the animal kingdom and aspirations after infinite goodness and beauty never to be fully realised in the physical world. The struggle between these two elements within us gives rise to many problems, and even if we have managed to go on our way for some time without being much disturbed by them, they will at the last press upon us in their acutest form in marriage. In any marriage that is not purely material the highest

MARRIAGE

activities of man's physical and of his spiritual nature are called into play, and if he means to face the issue and be at unity in himself he must find the true relation of these elements, their perfect reconciliation.

But though it culminates in marriage the problem does not begin there, and in all his activities perhaps the chief characteristic of man as contrasted with animals is that with him the physical and material world is more than an end in itself, it is a means to the realisation of spiritual truth. The very possession of this capacity for finding expression of spiritual and inner realities in material things makes man's nature far more subtle and complicated than pure animal nature, and gives it very different possibilities. With animals material means are used for simple material ends. In men material and spiritual react on one another for good and for evil. In the physical facts of animal life there is little or nothing that is repulsive except what is imputed by the human observer. Animals, especially those

A HARMONY OF BODY AND SOUL

in a wild and natural state, are singularly free from lust or greed; their daily life, their sexual relations, are for the most part full of beauty. Few things in nature provide more or more varied beauty than the many phases in the courtship of birds. We do find, it is true, a certain amount of what we should call cruelty in the animal world, but it is unpremeditated, born of the necessity of the struggle for existence, not of deliberate brutality. But with man things are otherwise. He must, it seems, be either higher or lower than the animals. There is, of course, a stage in civilisation in which he is pretty much at their level, and as un-self-conscious as they. Perhaps nowhere is this described more beautifully and simply, and I may add more tragically, than in a recent novel by Mr. L. S. Woolf, "The Village in the Jungle," where he writes of the relations of two Indian sisters, the one with her husband, the other with her child. But civilisation brings self-consciousness with it, and man must either rise to the call that

MARRIAGE

comes to him to use his physical nature in the service of his spirit, or allow the spiritual life, of which he begins to be conscious, to be subordinated to the claims of his body.

Let us be quite clear from the first. There is not anything evil about the human body in itself; surely we can learn so much from the light-hearted unconscious beauty God shows us in the physical world. What makes the body evil is its abuse by those who are becoming conscious of a power in themselves to control and order it. Animals are not prone to over-indulgence; still less are they capable of the toil and foresight which men will spend on devising means of self-gratification. They eat to live, for they are dominated by the law of self-preservation. So, too, the sexual relations of wild animals, while obviously exciting passion, do not seem to lead on to lust, but are limited and controlled by a force outside the animals themselves, the law of reproduction; the maternal, and in many cases the paternal instinct also, is as prominent and as passionate as the sexual; and

A HARMONY OF BODY AND SOUL

animals have a strong sense of responsibility in bringing up their young. Animals seem then to live in obedience to nature, but men are capable of disobedience as well as obedience to her laws, and in giving themselves over to greed, lust and drunkenness they both injure their bodies and deliberately prostitute their spiritual faculties to the service of perverted animalism.

What is the ideal? If we are not to be thorough-going pessimists like Schopenhauer we must wish to obey nature and to perpetuate the human race and keep it at its highest point of physical efficiency. But we seem to have a greater capacity for delight in physical pleasures than is necessary for nature's ends. Is this delight merely there that we may learn to curb it and exercise ourselves in self-control, or has it something more positive to contribute?

Let us for a moment look to another source for light on this problem and consider what it is that art does for us. The artist finds in the physical world and its joys the means

MARRIAGE

of self-expression. The pleasures of sound, colour, and form are all so much raw material for a work of art. He converts mere natural fact into spiritual reality. His meaning is bound up intimately and inextricably with the form that gives it expression; separate the two and both have lost their true value. It is not merely that he cannot communicate his feelings to others without clothing them in this material form; they are not clear even to himself until they are so expressed. He treats the material world sacramentally, finding in what is outward the expression of his inner emotion.¹ Surely this is what we ought all to do. We too should find means of self-realisation in material things.

As a matter of fact, we cannot help ourselves. If we despise external things and have nasty food, ugly houses and clumsy methods of speech our spiritual nature will

¹ I do not, of course, mean this in the crude sense that every picture must tell a story, or have a definite meaning. I am referring to theories such as Benedetto Croce's, that art is expression.

A HARMONY OF BODY AND SOUL

be the poorer for it. If we realise that all our external acts and everything about us must be expressive of our inner selves, we shall carry through our life something of the creative spirit of the artist. It is easy to see how this truth should affect our outlook on the world around us, and increasingly lead us to find beauty and expression in all we see and hear; but it should also give us greater respect for the life of the body. We must learn to understand its sacramental value and not judge it by standards of material utility alone. As it is, bodily desires and pleasures tend either to become obsessions or to be more or less condemned as belonging to our lower nature, even while we cannot empty our lives of them. But since these desires enter constantly into what is best in life, our relations with our fellow-men, we must find what exactly is their true place, their real value.

Friendship is, at first sight, the most characteristically human relationship. Animals are united by the tie of sex, by a gregarious

MARRIAGE

sense sometimes, and occasionally by a feeling for companionship ; but it would be difficult to maintain that what we feel to be the essence of friendship, a certain unity of thought, intellectual interests and feeling, could ever be found among them. In friendship there must normally be an element of physical attraction, but it is the spiritual and intellectual relationship that is usually strongest and most prominent. Some temperaments are, indeed, inclined to passionate friendships very closely akin to love ; and often this strong passion in friendship will take the place, at least for a time, of any feeling of love for one of the opposite sex. But such passion seems on the whole to be barren and fleeting ; either it is apt to degenerate into sentimentalism and to bear the bitter fruits of jealousy and self-consciousness, all destructive to the straightforward simplicity in interchange of thought and feeling proper to true friendship ; or it will pass and be outgrown as the friendship ripens into a more spiritual and intellectual and permanent re-

A HARMONY OF BODY AND SOUL

lationship. Still, though we feel that passion is a phase rather than an integral part of friendship, when people tell us that it is enough for them just to know that their friends exist and to hear from them, but that they feel no need of their bodily presence, we suspect that they know little of what true friendship means. Friendship does not ignore or dispense with bodily presence. Different temperaments express themselves differently ; some are very demonstrative, others more reserved. But everyone capable of close friendship must know the joy of being with his friend, not only for the interchange of thought, but to share with him, without need of many words, the delights, say, of beautiful country, of a picture gallery, of music, with a magnetic, almost physical intuition of his feelings.

On the whole in friendship between members of the same sex the physical and spiritual, the outer and the inner, fall naturally into their proper harmony ; but there is a danger of the physical disturbing the spiritual when

MARRIAGE

it comes to friendship between men and women. Some people seem, indeed, to think that none but the physical relation is possible here. Yet men and women, besides belonging to their own sex, are human beings after all. Men have long been treated as such, and as women are increasingly allowed to be human beings, to share in normal human education, work and interests, the common meeting ground between them and men will grow. Already most of us must have known cases where community of thought and interests has resulted in real friendship between a man and a woman. Such a friendship will probably not be quite the same as friendship between members of the same sex, for each sex has, as far as we can judge, its special contribution to make. But these contributions are spiritual no less than physical, and in friendship it is this spiritual side which will be far the strongest. There is always the possibility, however, that the sexual element will intrude itself; nor is there any better prospect for happiness in

A HARMONY OF BODY AND SOUL

married life than love that has thus grown out of friendship. But in some such friendships there may be barriers of various kinds to love ; passion may be felt by one and not by the other ; circumstances may be such as to make any indulgence of it wrong, or harmful to a third person ; and it should be clearly recognised that in any case the sexual element is not one that should be played with in oneself or another without realising the possible results.

When we come to the marriage relationship we shall find that many and varied opinions are held about it. Some, the ascetics, think that it belongs to men's 'lower nature' and tends to distract him from more spiritual things. Others think it is the proper outlet, provided by nature, for one set of human functions, and that when they can be thus duly exercised man is free to spend the rest of himself, undisturbed, on his spiritual and intellectual life. Both these views separate the outer from the inner ; they leave man with no unity in

MARRIAGE

himself, and do not allow for the view, which we have felt to be the true one, that the real use of the outer, the bodily or material nature, is to give expression to the deepest feelings of the inner or spiritual life. There are others again, nearer the truth, but somewhat unwise and impetuous, who assume that marriage is the ready-made solution of all our difficulties ; that in it man finds at once the fulfilment of his whole nature ; in fact, that ' they married and lived happily ever after ' is a simple and obvious truth.

Love, however, the only true foundation for the marriage relationship, is a complex, not a simple thing. It is not mere passion, the desire for self-gratification or, at the best, self-expression. True love carries with it the sympathy and understanding of the most perfect friendship, reverence for the soul and mind as well as for the body of another. For love should embrace all that is best in friendship ; and yet it is quite different from friendship because, of this

A HARMONY OF BODY AND SOUL

element of passion, passion not barren and fleeting but fruitful and capable of fulfilment, which is involved. Some people, indeed, think that the absence of sexual passion must make friendship more spiritual than love. But once again art teaches us that material physical things bring home to us spiritual truths with a peculiar force and immediateness. Perfect intimacy, more perfect, if the spiritual and physical activities of both are alike called out, than anything of which friendship is capable—this is the ideal of marriage ; but it is not to be attained in a moment. Complete harmony between the physical and the spiritual is never easy, and here we have body and spirit in their strongest and most intense moments. It is fatal if the physical side is allowed to loom large and the sympathy and understanding of first love are deadened by sentimentalism and emotionalism, not to speak of mere bodily indulgence ; it is a poor second-best if the two lives, the life of the body and that of the spirit, go along

MARRIAGE

side by side, not perhaps unduly interfering with one another, but certainly not helping one another. The body is given us as the expression of the soul, and passion is revolting unless it is the spontaneous and mutual expression of real inner feeling, not mere physical emotion. This belief should make us reverence the life of the body, but never for a moment feel that passion can be taken as a guide. The consummation of passion should never be the sole object of marriage ; but as Edward Carpenter writes,¹ " if bodily intimacy is denied, its denial will bar any real sense of repose and affiance, and make the relation restless, vague, tentative and unsatisfied."

Nature shows us that passion is meant to be steadfast and not wayward, and also reveals its kinship to the creative impulse or desire for expression felt by the artist, when it gives children as the fruit of the union of man and woman. Love, it appears, is not meant to be barren physically, or to

¹ *Love's Coming of Age.*

A HARMONY OF BODY AND SOUL

exhaust itself in a passing phase ; new life is to spring from it. And this, too, is a parable ; for spiritually the union of two people in marriage should give rise to fresh and more perfect life in the souls of those who are thus joined together. In complete intimacy of thought and life, each is able to give his spiritual self to the other in a way possible in no other human relationship ; nor is this new life meant for the private enjoyment of these two ; it should issue in greater kindness of soul, in more love to be given to others. The birth of children is nature's way of emphasising this truth, of showing that personal joy lays on us its responsibilities, responsibilities that are not burdensome, but merely means to greater joy and more perfect self-fulfilment.

This is the ideal, but an ideal that calls for the very best of every part of complex human nature. It will not be reached without effort ; and it is obvious that a relationship offering such possibilities is not one to be entered upon lightly and thought-

MARRIAGE

lessly. Failure to make something noble out of so great an opportunity is a disaster proportionate to the beauty of the ideal.

Some people complain that there is little of any such positive ideal of marriage to be found in Christianity ; that the only thing insisted upon is the command not to be divorced. But this is to misunderstand Christ's teaching about divorce,¹ which only follows as the natural consequence of His assertion that a perfect intimacy and therefore permanence in the marriage tie is part of God's essential purpose for the world. And the claim that it is God who presides over the union, tells us that free self-conscious human beings ought only to enter it if they feel assured that God's blessing is upon it. Further, though Christ's teaching may not contain discourses about ideal

¹ Matthew xix. 4-6. And he answered and said, Have ye not read that he which made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife ; and the twain shall become one flesh ? So that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.

A HARMONY OF BODY AND SOUL

marriage, or ideal friendship for that matter, He tells us enough of the divine will for man to enable us to work out our own ideals on lines which we believe to be the will of God for us. This was Christ's method of teaching, to tell us of the principles that should govern our whole lives rather than of their particular application ; and it should be our method too. Useful though specific education on these matters may be, it can never for a moment replace the inculcation of high ideals about the conduct of life as a whole, the impressing upon people that every department of life is sacred, and that the exercise of every kind of activity must react upon the whole character and personality. I will leave it to others to decide whether the views I have expressed seem to them to follow from Christian principles ; I will only here express my belief that what I have written about marriage is in harmony with what I understand that Christ taught us : firstly in the Incarnation, of the value and

MARRIAGE

sacredness of human life and the human body ; secondly, of the infinite value in God's eyes of every individual soul, whether of man or woman ; and lastly, of love as the main attribute of God's character, so that in the love of God and of our fellow-men we can alone find our most complete fulfilment, our nearest approach to the divine nature.

14 DAY USE
TURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below,
or on the date to which renewed. Renewals only:
Tel. No. 642-3405

Renewals may be made 4 days prior to date due.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

REC'D LD MAY 31 72 -2 PM 8

MAY 28 1980

REC. CIR. JUN 1 0 '80

MAY 22 1980

APR 13 1988

JUN 02 1989

APR. DISC.

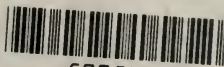
MAY 26 1980

CIRCULATION

LD21A-60m-8,'70
(N8887s10)476-A-32

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

U.C. BERKELEY LIB



C005647364

